

## The All-Russian Agricultural Workers' Union

The All-Russian Union of Agricultural Workers as at present constituted is of recent origin and growth. It was not until after the revolution of October 1917 that they saw the necessity of allying themselves with the city workers, the land workers were also carried away with the general revolutionary enthusiasm prevailing at that time. Until the revolution of 1917 the agricultural workers of Russia had no union of their own, neither during the time of the old Russian feudal system nor during the period of growth of the capitalist regimes. Some attempts to organize the Agricultural workers were made during the revolutionary movement of 1904—5; the union of the workers of Boutirsky Farm in Moscow, can be quoted as an example, but these were of a scattered, improvised character, without any general plan or aim; they had no serious influence upon the development of the Agricultural workers organization.

Only after the February revolution of 1917 were small unions of agricultural workers started, chiefly in the neighborhood of the capital and the near industrial Centres. This fact can only be explained by the influence of the industrial proletarians of the Trade-Union who were constantly increasing in numbers, and acquiring a strong revolutionary spirit. But all these unions were of a very primitive character both in their form of organization and in the aims they pursued. In the first place they lacked experience of organization which was very marked, and secondly the influence of the compromising leaders, who were mostly of the socialist revolutionary type with their narrow bourgeois ideals and their agrarian program full of contradiction and omissions.

These unions in the period of their development during the February revolution, aimed mainly at protecting their craft interests, not realising that the problem confronting agricultural workers was the ownership and organization of production.

Only in October 1917 was an end put to this position, and the illusions of craft unionism were thrown aside and first place was given to the problem of securing working class ownership and organization of the industry on communist principles. From this moment a revival took place in

the various Agricultural Workers' Unions which were in existence. The organization of new Unions were soon started in districts populated by an agricultural proletariat.

### The Composition and structure of the Union.

The main task of the first Central Committee was to organize the working masses, to attract them into the Union and to set up a proper apparatus. According to the rules, all agricultural wage workers are eligible for membership in the union. At the present time the union is composed of workers and employees on the Soviet Farms (agricultural orchards, cattle breeding, dairies, experimental stations) laborers as well as specialists working on the Soviet estates and serving in the Central and Local governmental districts, (agricult. orchards, cattle breeding farms, dairies, surveyors, etc.

The union is organized on industrial lines, therefore the workers and employees in auxiliary trades serving the Soviet Farms i. e. workers in mills, blacksmith shops; also members of other trades, saddlers, carpenters, joiners, locksmiths, tylers, coopers, shoemakers, tailors, are eligible for membership.

On the first of January 1920 the number of paying members in the union were 65,000; but this is only approximate because many local sections did not give any information, owing to the great distance and bad communications. The probable number of members is nearer 100,000. According to the data of the Commissariat of Agriculture this number of workers were employed, on Soviet Farms alone. As the membership is obligatory, it is quite clear that that number of members could not be less than the number of workers employed in the industry.

The Congress organized and drew up a scheme for organizing several sections of the union: such as Agricultural, Horticultural, Forestry, Land Surveying etc. but it soon became evident that such subdivision was unnecessary and was therefore abandoned. The land surveyors particularly urged the need for their section, but even they eventually abandoned this position, and the Bu-